



Friday, January 24, 2003

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Gilroy has an insider in D.C.

Thursday, January 23, 2003

By [Jon Leisel](#)

GILROY - Gilroy's new Congressman introduced himself to the Gilroy City Council last night, but he isn't really a new face at all.

Rep. Mike Honda (D-San Jose), who once represented Gilroy as a Santa Clara County supervisor, came before the City Council Tuesday to introduce himself and the local issues he's working on.

"It's like coming home again," he said during a short presentation at the start of the meeting.

The former science teacher, school principal and San Jose Unified trustee held the District 1 county supervisorial seat now occupied by Don Gage from 1990 to 1996.

He moved to the state Assembly before jumping to Congress in 2000, and became the Garlic Capital's point person in the U.S. House of Representatives after last year's redistricting, the process after every census where the state Legislature redraws political boundaries to adjust for shifts in population.

The city was moved out of Rep. Zoe Lofgren's (D-San Jose) 16th Congressional District and into Honda's 15th District, which stretches north to Milpitas and includes roughly a third of San Jose as well as suburbs such as Campbell, Cupertino and Los Gatos.

While Honda said he will stage his main office in Campbell to retain a central location in his district, he said he plans to have a staff member in Gilroy at least once a month. He's also working on a toll-free telephone office number for residents to use when contacting the office. And Councilman Peter Arellano's daughter Bernardette is serving as a college intern there.

"You have an 'insider' who is your eyes and ears and also a voice," Honda said.

Honda highlighted his plans to work on several local issues at the meeting. He noted Gilroy is a hub of traffic from the Central and Salinas valleys, and pledged to work on local transportation issues such as safety improvements on state Highway 152 and Caltrain doubletracking - as well more regional ones, such as the expansion of BART to San Jose.

Honda said he has also met with the Chinese consul general to discuss dumping of foreign garlic in the United States - a problem for major local producers.

"We're on top of that and are looking for solutions," he said.

Mayor Tom Springer said he hopes to gain Honda's assistance on the future relocation and expansion of the city's post office. He also invited him to the Garlic Festival, while Councilman Bob Dillon asked him to come to the city's Memorial Day parade.

"The warmth of Gilroy is very important - being a part of the garlic festival is

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(76.4%)

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(21.03%)

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(2.05%)

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important ..." Honda said. "I'll make it a point to be here."

Arellano said Honda knows the area well.

"I believe we have a friend in Congress now that you're back in our district," he said.

Honda beat Republican challenger Linda Rae Hermann for re-election last November.

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